

Deep inside suburban home lurks organ with 800 pipes

By BOB GROSS

Floyd Bunt gives that tired term "Renaissance Man" a new lease on life. Bunt's interests and activities range almost as far afield as his travels — he and his wife, Marion, have traveled to more than 80 countries. They recently returned from a trip that took them to the People's Republic of China.

And he's done just about everything from working with automotive and aeronautical machinery to working with wood.

Bunt, who taught science at Cranbrook School for more than 25 years, now is the director of high school rela-

tions at Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield.

He's a pilot, a deputy sheriff for Oakland County and a member of the Birmingham Civil Defense Rescue Squad. And to top that, he holds both silver and bronze medals and the Award of Merit from the Royal Lifesaving Society of London, England.

But the really interesting thing about Bunt is what he has hidden in the depths of his West Bloomfield home.

It's special and it's rare, but it's hardly a secret — after all, how can you keep secret a working 800-pipe theater organ?

Especially when those pipes burst

into "Shine on Harvest Moon."

BUNT'S ORGAN was manufactured by the Page Organ Co. of Lima, Ohio. It didn't leave the Buckeye state until Bunt got hold of it.

"This was installed in the State Theater in Sandusky, Ohio, in 1924," said Bunt, "and the organ itself, without installation, cost \$22,000. You couldn't duplicate it today for \$50,000-60,000."

Bunt's organ has three keyboards — or manuals — and eight sets of pipes — or ranks.

You got an idea of why they're called ranks once you take a peek into the basement room where the pipes are installed. They look like soldiers standing at orderly — but crowded — attention. Well, almost all of them are at attention. There are a few pipes that have to lie down on the job.

"Some of them," said Bunt, "I had to lay on their sides because they're about 12 feet long."

Bunt's organ — like all theater organs — was designed to accompany silent movies. Since the movie didn't have a soundtrack, the organist provided the sound effects as well as the musical accompaniment.

The organ has what Bunt called a "toy counter," a special effects section that features a train whistle, a ship's whistle and a working automobile horn. And it has a percussion section with a xylophone, drums, chimes and orchestral bells.

So watching a silent movie — at least in theaters equipped with an organ — wasn't quite like watching a "silent" movie. They could be pretty noisy affairs.

AND PRETTY congenial affairs as well. Moviegoers in the early days didn't rush the candy counter between features as they do now. They stayed in their seats while the projectionist flashed the words to popular songs on the screen. The organist played, and

the audience sang along.

Bunt, one of the first members of the Motor City Theater Organ Society — the outfit that bought the Redford Theater and bought and restored the organ at the Royal Oak Theater — has had some first-hand knowledge of what a sing-a-long was like.

"I used to play Friday nights at both the Redford and Royal Oak theaters for 20-minute intermission between the main features."

So theater organs, in addition to accompanying films and providing sound effects, also provided some measure of music for pure enjoyment. In fact, Bunt said, theater organs were one of the few ways people could enjoy mechanically reproduced "sound in the round."

"THIS IS original stereo," said Bunt. "In a theater, you had one section on one side of the theater, and one section on the other, so you had stereo."

"I set this up," he said, "the way it was originally in the theater with the number of ranks of pipes — a rank of pipes is a whole set of pipes — as it was in the theater, and I could bring in one set or the other set."

But stereo is a little hard to pick up clearly when the speakers — to really stretch an analogy — are of necessity located close to each other as the ranks in Bunt's basement are.

"Now the theater that this came out of," said Bunt, "was a 2,500-seat theater, and it just filled that theater, and you cannot get the reverberations here in the house."

"On the other hand, this one was preserved intact. In many cases, the organs were split and pieces were sold."

And sometimes pieces were sold for just scrap.

"During the war (World War II)," said Bunt, "a lot of people came in and just simply used the pipes — because the pipes are mainly lead and tin, and they wanted to melt them down for sol-

der and so on — and we wanted to prevent that."

SOME ORGANS were taken out of the original theaters and placed in private homes. Others — like the three-manual, 10-rank organ originally installed in the Birmingham Theatre — have found new life elsewhere — it's now the showpiece, with an additional 11 ranks, of the Organ Grinder's Pizza and Pies pizza parlor in Pontiac Township.

But there are organs that can be enjoyed in their original surroundings.

"One of the best ones," said Bunt, "is the one in the Fox Theater — and I've worked on that."

"The one that's owned by the Detroit Theater Organ Society (a four-manual, 34-rank Wurlitzer) — in the Senate Theater (on Michigan Avenue) — came

out of the Fisher Theater, and I went down there and helped take that one out of there."

Other theaters around town where you can get an idea of "the good old days" are the Redford Theater on Lahser Road in Redford Township, the Royal Oak Music Theater on Fourth, the Punch and Judy on Kercheval in Grosse Pointe, and the Michigan Theater on Liberty in Ann Arbor.

While it's true that a theater organ, when you get right down to it, is nothing but a lot of air — and not even hot air at that — still there's something about it.

"Individual pipes," explained Bunt. "Out of a speaker, even a 15- or 30-inch speaker, you can't expect to get the same sound you can get out of 800 pipes, each one sounding out."

Providence Hospital offers health class

Providence Hospital launches a series of classes ranging from one to six weeks on a wide range of health topics in Southfield and Novi. Instructors will be physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other professional personnel.

The programs are offered free or for a nominal cost to cover materials. The public school systems are cooperating with the hospital in this project by scheduling the classes through their community education departments. Because class size is limited, advance registration is necessary. For additional information and registration, call the Providence community health education office at 424-3088.

Dancercise is a series of exercises incorporating dance and done to music help promote weight loss, cardiovascular fitness, correct posture and muscle tone. Classes will run from 7-8 p.m., Mondays, Sept. 29-Dec. 15 at Brace-Lederle Community Education Center, Southfield. A class also meets from 6:30-7:30 a.m. Thursdays, Sept. 25-Dec. 18 at Providence Hospital Fisher Center auditorium.

Stop Smoking Clinic is designed to help people who want to quit smoking. This clinic consists of six sessions meeting on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Participants will learn behavioral techniques and relaxation exercises and gain support from group discussions. Groups for series I meet from 7-9 p.m. Oct. 1, 3, 6, 19, 15 and 17. Groups for series II meet from 7-9 p.m., Nov. 5, 7, 12, 14, 19 and 21. Both meet at Brace-Lederle Community Education Center, Southfield. There is a \$10 materials fee.

STRAIGHT TALK on Women's Health is a one-session program teaching the anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system, the technique of monthly breast self-examination and the importance of regular pap tests for the early detection of cancer. Rita Kaminski will be the instructor for all sessions. Class meets from 10 a.m. to noon, Wednesdays from Oct. 1

through Dec. 23 at Brace-Lederle Community Education Center, Southfield. A class meets from 10 a.m. to noon, Tuesdays, Sept. 23 through Oct. 28 in Novi High School.

The ABC's of Drugs is aimed at increasing awareness in the proper use of medication. This program presents a review of various drugs, their action and interaction, uses and abuses. The one-session offering will include time for specific questions. Class meets from 7-8:30 p.m., Thursdays Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11 in Providence Hospital, Fisher Center auditorium, Southfield. Kathleen Martin, R. Ph., assistant director of pharmaceutical services will instruct. Another class meets from 7-8:30 p.m. Oct. 1, Nov. 5 and Dec. 3 in Novi High School. Marty Zwiesler, R. Ph. will instruct.

HEARTSAVER CLASS — CPR teaches the life-saving technique of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), a combination of mouth-to-mouth breathing and chest compression which is extremely effective in saving the lives of victims of heart attacks, drowning, electrical shock and other medical emergencies when administered in the first critical minutes after breathing and heart have stopped. Certified instructors from Providence Hospital will teach the one-session class from 6-9 p.m., the first and third Monday of every month beginning Sept. 22 in Providence Hospital-Fisher Center auditorium. Another session will be from 6-9 p.m. every Tuesday beginning in October at Brace-Lederle Adult Education Center, Southfield.

Basic Cardiac Life Support is aimed at persons who have completed the Heartsaver class. They will learn two-person resuscitation techniques, CPR for infants and management of airway obstruction. Classes will be from 6-8 p.m., the second and fourth Monday, monthly beginning Sept. 8 at Providence Hospital Fisher Center auditorium, Southfield.

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